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Perv-Clergy Tracker Can't Catch Cardinal's Ear

By Douglas Montero
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YOU'D figure it would be easy for John Bambrick, a priest from New Jersey, to get a sit-down chat with Edward Cardinal Egan.

But he can't, despite a formal letter requesting it.

You see, Bambrick is a priest sexual-abuse victim and advocate who wants Egan to rein in and defrock a priest who abused him during the 1980s.

The accused priest, the Rev. Anthony Eremito, who was once a pastor at Holy Cross Church on West 42nd Street in Manhattan, is still on the loose.

Loose in Lubbock, Texas, about 300 miles west of Dallas, where 300 bishops and Egan are trying to resolve a priest sex-abuse scandal that has exploded in their faces.

Also in Dallas is Bishop Placido Rodriguez, who heads the Lubbock Diocese, which in 1998 allowed him to minister at a hospital called the Covenant Health System. The hospital is affiliated with a children's medical center.

Yesterday, the local Lubbock paper reported that Eremito took a leave of absence from his chaplain duties after Bambrick found him this past March.

"I felt that's when I should go public because I feel they were not going to remove him," said Bambrick, 37. "I felt the best chance I had of saving kids was to tell their parents about him."

"If they weren't going to remove him - then I would do it."

That's what he wants to talk to Egan about. Once a priest is ordained by the Archdiocese of New York, he remains their property - regardless of where assigned.

The same principal applies to all child-molesting priests from the New York area dioceses who melt into society only to resurface again - ready for action.

Eremito got into trouble in 1991 when Bambrick told the Archdiocese of New York about the sexual abuse that began when he was 15 and an aspiring priest.

The late John Cardinal O'Connor removed Eremito from Holy Cross and suspended him. A few years later, Bambrick learned Eremito was working in a Westchester County church and later at a church in Atlantic Highlands, N.J., before he split town.

Joseph Zwilling, an archdiocese spokesman, acknowledged Eremito was among the three dozen priests whose names were handed over to the area district attorney.

And Zwilling said the Diocese of Lubbock was aware of Eremito's troubles in New York and decided to let him preach anyway.

Eremito did not return a call for comment. Bishop Rodriguez said he was unaware of the allegations against Eremito, and had taken him on with a recommendation from O'Connor.

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